

BENEFITS OF EMPLOYEE HANDBOOKS

By: Daniel J. Fetter

What is an Employee Handbook?

An employee handbook is distributed to employees at the time of hire and, generally speaking, describes the company's policies and procedures, defines employee expectations, specifies the employment relationship and informs employees of what they can (and cannot) expect as employees of the company. In other words, it provides the framework for how the company is to be operated. Below, I have listed some of the key benefits of implementing an employee handbook in the workplace:

- **Provide General Information:**

Employee handbooks can be a great tool to familiarize and introduce new employees to a company. The handbook should be able to answer general employment-related questions, which will ultimately reduce the amount of time management personnel spends answering individual questions.

- **Employee Expectations:**

The handbook should let the employee know what the company expects out of his or her employment, including but not limited to: (i) appropriate behavior on company time; (ii) how to request time off in a manner that does not disrupt business operations; (iii) how to properly address complaints at the workplace; and (iv) safety compliance, etc. When these policies are clearly articulated to the employee at the time of hire, it can prevent unnecessary problems down the road.

- **Legal Protection:**

When consistently enforced, a well-drafted handbook should provide a defense to employee claims. For example, New York is an employment at-will state. This means an employer has the right to terminate an employee at any time for any reason or no reason at all, subject to limited exceptions (e.g., discriminatory reasons). By putting employees on notice of their status as an "at-will" employee, employees may find it difficult to challenge their termination.

A couple additional tips: (1) have employees sign an acknowledgment form stating they received and read the employee handbook; and (2) have the handbook occasionally reviewed for necessary updates.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or the attorney in our office with whom you typically work.

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